Carter Burdine (left) and his Uncle Junior view remains of dismembered chickens.

On the Trail of

UNIDENTIFIED FURRY OBJECTS

Skeptics dismiss the "creature" as imagination or a prank — but something in Indiana killed Carter Burdine's 170 chickens.

By Jerome Clark
Crawfordsville (Ind.) Journal and Review
photos by Joe Boswell

IT'S GONE now, the thing that terrorized Roachdale, Ind., last summer, and few of the residents of this tiny village 40 miles west of Indianapolis are willing to talk about it anymore. By now the "monster" is a subject for ridicule so far as most people are concerned — especially if they didn't see it themselves.

One of the skeptics is Town Marshal Leroy Cloncs. Looking back on the affair he says, "I talked to a lot of people but I never came up with anything that could be substantiated. I'm sure it was just a prank that snowballed. People's imaginations just got carried away, that's all. Some of 'em were probably full of liquor and they just started shootin' away when they heard something. My main concern was that some poor soul might get his head blown off."

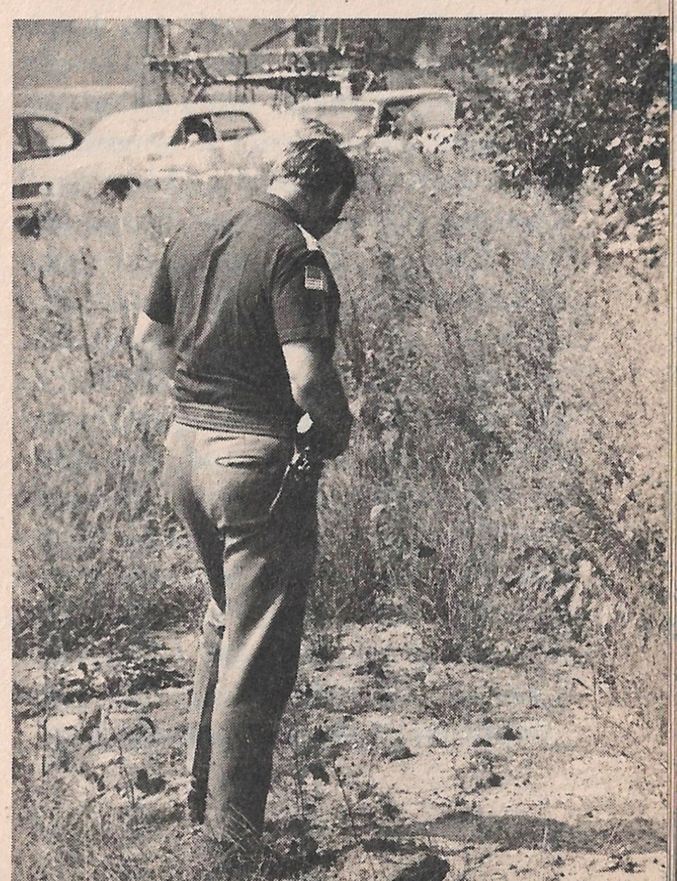
It's easy to sneer these days — but in the summer of 1972 reports of the creature had Roachdale in an uproar, causing among other things the first traffic jam in its history as curiosity-seekers from miles around converged on the town. Many of them, unfortunately, were armed and only a miracle prevented the kind of accident law enforcement officers feared. More than a few Roachdale residents believed the end of the world was imminent. Persons of fundamentalist persuasion turned to the Scriptures and read — or so they claimed — that in its last days the earth would be overrun by hairy beasts, half-human, half-animal.

Of course it wasn't the earth, just tiny Roachdale and a few other obscure out-of-the-way spots, that hosted monsters during a memorably Fortean summer. In July similar creatures were reported in Louisiana, Missouri, Springdale, Ark., and Peoria and Cairo, Ill. Yet in many ways the creature that came to Roachdale in early August was the weirdest of all.

* * *

MRS. LOU Rogers was the first person to sense the presence of a mysterious "something." In early August she and her husband Randy were renting a farm outside Roachdale; they have since moved into town. Late one evening with her toddler son Keith she stepped outside to roll up the windows in the family car. The sky had clouded over and it was sprinkling. As she stood in the dark she heard a

Parke County's Sheriff Gary Cooper broadcast bizarre warning: "Be on the lookout for 10-foot-tall monster."



sound rather like a growl that came out: "boo" or "oo." Mrs. Rogers, a young woman who is not easily frightened — "You hear all kinds of strange noises in the country," she says — thought nothing of it at first.

Then she heard it again. Her little boy was terrified and now she listened closely. The growl was "real deep" but it sounded human, not animal. Suddenly she felt as if someone or something was breathing down her neck. Turning quickly she peered around in the darkness. Although she could see nothing she knew something was out there and she and little Keith hurried back into the house.

She was unaware of it then but about 90 minutes earlier a luminous object had hovered briefly over a cornfield separating the Rogers' house from a neighbor's and then "just sort of blew up." Among those who saw it was one of Mrs. Rogers' brothers who happened to be looking out the window of a farmhouse near Ladoga, a few miles north of Roachdale. Later he mentioned this to his sister and her husband, saying he thought a plane had exploded. None had. Whatever exploded, it left no trace except — possibly — the creature that for the next few weeks seemed to have taken up residence in that very cornfield.

Within the next few nights the Rogerses began to hear strange noises around the house. "It sounded as if someone was going around the place pounding on the siding and windows," Rogers said. "Whatever it was, it must have gotten braver every night because the noise got louder every night." As it got braver Rogers got uneasier. He borrowed his father's shotgun as a defense against the marauder. When he heard it he would rush outside only to catch a glimpse of a six-foot, enormously broad-shouldered, shadowy biped fleeing into the cornfield.

"It would always come around at a certain hour — between 10:00 and 11:30 at night," Lou Rogers recalled. "You could feel it coming somehow. It's hard to explain. The feeling would just keep getting stronger and stronger and when it got strongest you knew something had to happen. Then the knocking would start. This happened every night for two or three weeks. Another thing — it smelled *rotten,* like dead animals or garbage."

Randy and Lou Rogers never saw the creature clearly because it appeared only in the darkness but they were able to observe that it was hairy and black. Once while Mrs. Rogers was washing dishes she saw it ducking up and

down outside the window above the sink.

"But I was never exactly afraid of it," she said. "If it was going to hurt me it would have that first night. I had no awareness or fear of it in the daytime. I'd even leave the doors open. Sometimes I'd put out garbage and later it would be gone. My husband thought I was crazy, trying to make friends like that. But I was pretty curious about it."

The couple tried to think of a rational explanation but none would fit.

"We sort of thought it might be a gorilla," Mrs. Rogers said. "It stood like a man but ran on all fours — and even on all fours it was as tall as my husband who is five-foot-nine. It was real broad.

"And what was weird was that we could never find tracks, even when it ran over mud. It would run and jump but it was like somehow it wasn't touching anything. When it ran through weeds you couldn't hear anything. And sometimes when you looked at it, it seemed you could see *through* it."

Once, however, Mrs. Rogers and her brother did find a pair of tracks made by something that stood on two feet — or rather, a foot and a stub — but these were only three inches across, much smaller, she was certain, than the creature would have left. As to what kind of being may have left the tracks she had no idea. Nor did she know who had left a plastic "flying saucer" toy that mysteriously turned up near the house one day. It did not belong to Keith, who examined it without interest and put it out with the trash. When Mrs. Rogers looked for it the next day the toy had disappeared.

* * *

THE ROGERS took it all fairly calmly — in fact, until the community-wide furor started the third week of August they shared their experiences only with a handful of friends — but the rest of Roachdale didn't. The story hit the newspapers on August 22.

"WHAT IS IT?" the *Crawfordsville Journal and Review* headlined its article. "Residents of this small Putnam County community," the report began, "are concerned about some unidentified creature which has been stalking the surrounding area for the past two to three weeks. Some three dozen persons say they have seen someone or something wandering about on the east side of town."

Conservation Officer William Woodall of Crawfordsville had arrived in Roachdale on Monday the 21st to investigate and found Roachdale residents near panic.

He listened sympathetically to their stories, even the wildest ones, and on the first day interviewed five persons from four different families who said they had seen the thing. Among those he talked with were the Rogerses, who reported the creature had left their farm after Randy and several friends had set out one night to try to capture it. One of them (a young man from nearby Bainbridge whom FATE has since interviewed but who has asked that his name be withheld) encountered the creature when it stepped out of a roadside ditch. The man yelled, "Stop or I'll shoot!" It didn't and he did but it got away.

Another report, which Woodall calls the strangest of all he investigated, came from a woman on the east side of town who late on the evening of the 14th was sitting on her front porch with her husband and daughter when she noticed something shining in a field across the road. It appeared, she said, that two large "balls of fire" between four and six inches apart were staring across at them.

"From time to time the 'balls of fire' would turn and watch a passing car, then turn back toward us," she claimed. Soon a second pair of ""balls of fire" joined the first.

"We watched for a good little bit. None of us wanted to go over to see what it was."

The family went indoors and watched from there. The "balls of fire" continued to stare at them. At 2:00 A. M. the husband and daughter retired but the wife stayed up watching as the thing behind the glowing balls, whatever it might have been, seemed to go "down on all fours feeding like a dog. Then at times it would stand up and peer around." When she finally went to bed at 3:40 it — or they — were still there. The next day they were gone.

The woman confirmed the story for FATE but refused permission to reveal her name. She says she is tired of being ridiculed. "I don't care what they say," she said. "We know what we saw."

Other sightings of the creature are supposed to have been made by groups of teen-aged boys along the railroad tracks. The young man from Bainbridge mentioned earlier told us that he and five friends, after hearing the teen-agers' stories (one of which said the creature had chased them), walked along the tracks themselves one night hoping to see something. The group split in two, our informant and three others setting off down the tracks and the other two remaining behind. The latter two supposedly then saw the creature take refuge in a tree from which our informant, who says he is a skeptic, saw two shining eyes.

"I think they were just reflections," he concluded — although reflections of what he does not say.

The *Journal and Review* gives a somewhat vague report of another incident: "There is one account of two young men who claim to have seen (the creature) during the daytime hours. The two men had seen the creature at night and decided they would try to see if they could find it in the daytime. They told the officer* they were walking along the railroad tracks when they came upon an animal of some kind. They described the creature as covered with fur. They said it was sitting with its front feet on the tracks and it was so large that its body reached to the bottom of the ditch along the tracks."

* * *

FORTUNATELY there is nothing vague about the Burdine reports which rank among the most dramatic of all.

About 9:00 P. M. Tuesday, August 22, Carter Burdine and his uncle Bill ("Junior") Burdine arrived at Carter's farm to discover the remains of more than 60 chickens which had been ripped apart and scattered along a path leading 200 feet from the coop to the front yard of the house. Whatever had killed them had done only that — it had not eaten them.

They called Marshal Cloncs who arrived within a few minutes. As they stood surveying the damage, all three heard a noise that seemed to come from between the chicken coop and the road. Cloncs got into his car and drove slowly up the road while Junior Burdine walked behind. The car was pulling away from him when suddenly something rose from the ditch and dashed across the road within six feet of him — but it moved so fast that Burdine didn't get a good look nor did he have time to shoot.

The men did find the spot where it crossed the fence on the opposite side of the road. "That fence was just mashed to the ground," Burdine said later. "That thing was *heavy*." It left a trail of trampled weeds and grass. Carter Burdine, who heard it, said it had to have been running on two feet. (This contradicts the Rogerses who said they could not hear the creature running and that it ran on all fours.)

Carter also found that the trail of dead chickens led directly to a pail in the yard containing cu-

*Woodall — who in turn told us he does not recall their names.

cumbers and tomatoes which he had planned to feed to the hogs. Now the pail was only half full.

First suspecting the family dogs the Burdines checked them for traces of blood and feathers. They found none. Carter then recalled that the night before, about midnight, he had waked to hear something stepping onto the porch. His wife said it was just one of the dogs but Carter wasn't so sure.

"The dog must have gained a lot of weight," he said, "because the porch squeaked."

Both Carter and Junior noticed a "musty" odor and by now they were sure the creature people were reporting around Roachdale was responsible for killing the chickens. Certainly *something* out of the ordinary was in the area. When they first had returned to Carter's place and discovered the slaughtered chickens they also had found the meanest farm dog — one who would bite anything or anybody — cowering against the porch. "The other dog was so frightened he wouldn't come out of the pen," Carter said.

Within a matter of hours the creature revisited Carter's farm. This time he and Junior were returning to the farm in the early morning hours after having dropped off Carter's wife with relatives in town. In the headlights of their car they caught sight of the creature standing in the chicken house door.

"This thing completely blocked out the lights inside the chicken house," Junior said. The door is six by eight feet and its shoulders came up to the top of the door, up to where the neck should have been. But this thing didn't have a neck. To me it looked like an orangutan or a gorilla. It had long hair with kind of a brownish cast to it — sort of rust color. I never saw its eyes or its face. It was making a groaning racket."

The creature dashed for the barn and leaped into the haymow. Carter and his father Herman Burdine approached the barn, guns ready. Junior went around the building and a moment later Herman and Carter heard him yell, "Bring me a light!"

Herman said, "By the time Carter and I got out of the barn and around the corner my brother was firing at something across the field. I didn't see a thing but I pulled up and started firing in the same direction."

"I shot four times with a pump shotgun," Junior said. "The thing was only about 100 feet away when I started shooting. I must have hit it. I've killed a lot of rabbits at that distance."

Nevertheless, there was no indication that the creature had been touched.

The Burdines trudged back to the chicken house to count their losses. About 110 chickens had been destroyed — ripped open and drained of blood. Of an original flock of 200 chickens Carter had lost all but 30.

Later when Woodall investigated he searched carefully through the strewn remains looking for any physical trace of the killer. He found nothing.

"I never could find any concrete physical evidence," Woodall recalled several months later. "All I ever had to go on were a lot of people's stories of what they saw. I think I couldn't find any tracks because the ground was hard and the vegetation high."

At 10 o'clock the evening after Junior Burdine had missed his target, 20 armed men, including Woodall, Cloncs, Putnam County deputies and special deputies, met to plan a thorough search. Their efforts were hampered, however, by the large number of cars mostly driven by teen-agers looking for excitement. The next day Woodall called off the search.

"There were just too many people out there," he said. "If the thing had been out that night it probably would have been run over by one of the searchers' cars because so many people were out looking for it.

"I'm checking out some things that may be connected with it," he told the newspapers, "but I won't know for a while."

Several strands of animal hair thought to be a clue turned out to be from a horse, a Purdue University laboratory analysis revealed. Theories about the creature's true identity — such as an escaped kangaroo or a mentally ill man garbed in a buffalo robe — similarly proved groundless.

By the end of the week reports had subsided. The creature that visited Roachdale had gone back to wherever it came from.

* * *

JUST WHAT appeared three weeks later in Parke County (north of Roachdale's Putnam County) no one seems to know.

Shortly before 11:00 A. M. Wednesday, September 20, Parke County Sheriff Gary Cooper broadcast a bizarre warning to authorities in other counties: "Attention all counties surrounding Parke County. Be on the lookout for a 10-foot-tall monster. It is covered with fur and its feet are 21 inches long."

Cooper explained that he had received several calls from the Lodi, Tangier, Howard and Sylvania area, a sparsely-settled heavily-wooded region near the

Parke-Fountain County line. The creature had been seen on Tuesday night.

"One lady came to my office with the story and I have had at least three other persons call in sightings," Cooper said. He would not release any of the witnesses' names.

"I am not going to rule out any possibility," Cooper said. "I have talked to Putnam County authorities and those people over there had something and this could be the same thing but I doubt it. It could be anything.

"There never used to be any deer in this area and now we have some. So I believe we could have a bear or some other big animal here.

"We intend to check everything until we determine just what it is."

Two coon dogs and a pig were killed by something that slashed them across the stomach. Cooper thought a badger might have done it but he wasn't sure. "I'm not ruling out anything at this point," he said.

"Apparently," the *Journal and Review* concluded, "this monster, just as the creature from Roachdale, will be listed as another of West-Central Indiana's UFOs (unidentified furry objects)."

EXORCISM IN SINGAPORE

GENERAL ELECTRIC Company's television and appliance plant in Singapore was bedeviled by ghosts in January 1973, reports United Press International. The disturbance began on Saturday, January 13, when several female employees began screaming hysterically claiming they had seen ghosts in the GE plant which is located on two floors of an industrial-area apartment building. During the week the hysteria spread. More than 50 employees had to be taken home after collapsing and production virtually came to a halt.

Plant manager John Dugan called in a *bomah* (Malay witch doctor) on Thursday to drive out the evil spirits but his efforts failed to check the mass hysteria. The next day Dugan recruited additional *bomahs* plus a Buddhist monk and an Indian mystic who burned incense and sprinkled magic water. This time the exorcism seemed more successful. The afternoon shift of some 1,000 workers, mainly girls of 18 and 19, worked without interruption.

Medical experts they were at a loss to explain these outbreaks of mass hysteria.

True Mystic Experiences

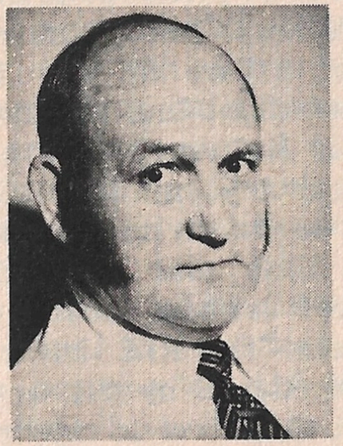
FATE will pay $5.00 for each true experience published. Stories should be less than 300 words and typed double-spaced on one side of the paper. They may be sent to the TME Editor, FATE Magazine, 500 Hyacinth Pl., Highland Park, Ill. 60035. They must be signed by the author and address must be shown. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelope.

COLLISION COURSE

By V. Vee Reynolds

IN 1956 I had an experience that convinced me dreams hold messages for us. My younger brother Rell was serving a mission for the Mormon Church in Denver and was told he could use his own car if he could get someone to deliver it to him there. My father Scott Reynolds agreed to drive the Plymouth coupe from Salt Lake City to Denver and catch a plane back. When Dad told me of this plan I had an immediate hunch that he would be in danger if he made the long drive. Consequently I volunteered to drive the car myself. I would leave Friday directly after work and drive straight through to Denver, deliver the car Saturday and catch a plane home.

Thursday night, July 26, 1956, I had a most realistic dream concerning my trip. I dreamed I had covered a considerable portion of the distance when I became involved in an accident. In my dream my car collided with a Pacific Intermountain Express (PIE) truck but I didn't seem to be hurt. I recognized the driver of the truck as the one who normally made PIE deliveries to the naval supply depot in Clearfield where I worked. I asked him in the dream why he was in Wyoming and he replied that he had to be there so he could become involved in the accident with me. When I related the vivid dream to my wife the next morning we concluded it was the result of my anxiety over the



V. Vee Reynolds